Reza Afshar: A WWI Memoir

Annual World Almanac: End of the Colonial Era

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Abdolkarim Tabatabaie, ed.

Mahasti Afshar, annotated & illustrated translation

2025

Reza Afshar[1]

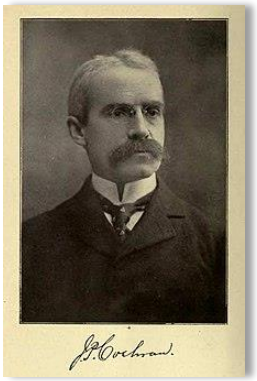
Throughout my life, I have scoffed at death and thrived on a bright spirit. My dream has been to see my country prosper and for the countenance of Iranians to be marked by success and accomplishment.

Over a lifelong experience, I have learned that mankind will fear a dead lion but will flog a live bull.

My birthplace is the former Urumieh, now known as Rezaieh. I was born in 1887 (18 Mehr 1266). My father's first name was Shafiʿ, a native of Garakan [related to Haji Mirza Nasrullah Vazir] whose family, the Qarib, had relocated to Rezaieh. My mother hailed from the Afshar tribe in Rezaieh. My choice of Afshar for a surname over Qarib is a matter of personal taste and related matters that do not warrant parsing here.[2]

I lived in Rezaieh until I was seventeen. After [graduating from the American School of Urmia] I studied Persian and Arabic under the late Sheikh Jalil Adib ol-Ulama and attended the American College [of Tehran.]

Dr. Joseph Cochran[3]



"The Avenue from Urmia College"

The American College, now Urmieh University, founded in 1879 by the Rev. Dr. Joseph Plumb Cochran, catered to the Christian community and increasingly to Muslims. He also built Westminster College, the first modern Western medical school and hospital in Iran. Financed by the American Presbyterian Foreign Mission, the campus included a seminary and was on a 15-acre lot 3 Km west of Urmia on the road to Bend Village, روستای بند.

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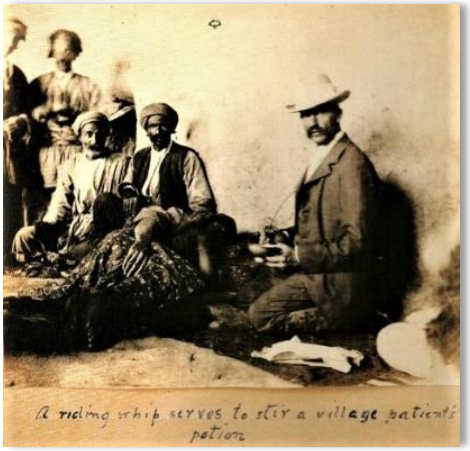
[1] All italicized copy and images are the translator's additions.

[2] In his 1958 memoir *Zendegi-ye Tufani,* Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh refers to "Mirza Reza Khan Dārā," saying "He went by Reza Shafiʿzadeh at the American Presbyterian School of Urmia, Dārā in Europe, and Afshar in Tehran until the end of his life." Shafiʿzadeh ("son of Shafiʿ") aligns with Iranian custom before adopting family names was mandated in 1934. But "Dārā" is not attested in any other source. By 1958, Reza Afshar was well known as a longtime Majles deputy, governor, minister of roads, and in 1945, the pioneering co-founder of Iranian Airways, the first commercial airline in the country. Taqizadeh's choice to dismiss Afshar's identity corresponds with his questionable accounts of their time together in New York in 1913-14, more on which below.

[3] Born and raised in Urmia to missionary parents, Cochran graduated from New York Medical College and in 1878 returned to Urmia with his wife Katherine T. Hale. His dedication to his work was legendary. He died of typhoid fever at 50 and was buried in Seer village near Urmia as were the other American faculty, including Drs. Wright, Holmes, Van Norden, and Miller.

'A riding whip serves to stir a village patients' potion'

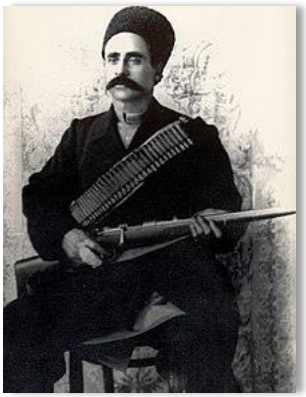


Dr. Cochran meeting a Kurdish khan and his men

Howard C. Baskerville, "The American Lafayette of Iran," a 22-year-old Presbyterian from Nebraska, arrived in 1907 to teach at the American Memorial School of Tabriz (est. 1881). In 1909, Tsarist forces attacked Tabriz when the Majles refused to fire the American Morgan Shuster who was in charge of Persia's finances and had built a gendarmerie to collect taxes.

Howard Baskerville

Sattar Khan

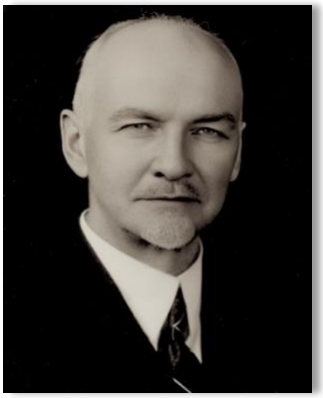


Sattar Khan & Baqer Khan (C) *and the revolutionaries*

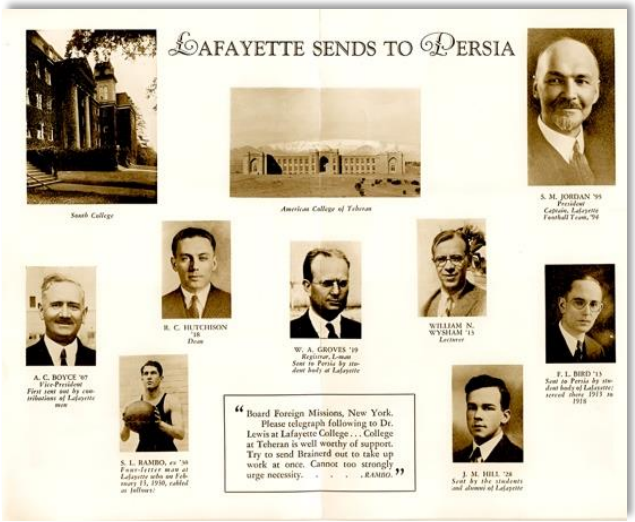
Baskerville joined Sattar Khan's Fadaiyan when they counter-attacked and was killed on 19 April. The revolutionaries were defeated when Russians shelled and occupied Tabriz on April 31.

The Fadaiyan cannon dugout in the Arg grounds

Reza Afshar's alma mater The American College of Tehran was founded by Dr. Samuel Martin Jordan in 1898. A Presbyterian minister and medical doctor, Jordan had been sent by Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, to expand an elementary school that had been built by James Bassett in 1872.



In 1913, Jordan bought a 40-acre lot near the Yousef-Abad Gate where he built The American College of Tehran, which offered a bachelor's degree. In 1940, the college was nationalized and with the B.A. degree eliminated, renamed Alborz High School.



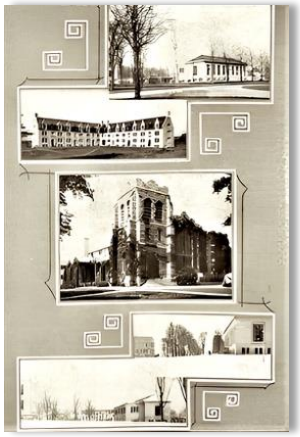
Lafayette College faculty in Tehran

The American College of Tehran under construction and (R) after completion

Alborz High School named after the eponymous mountain range north of the capital

After graduating in 1909, I left for the United States with a small amount of money in my pocket. When I landed in America, I had no more than $15 to my name and the academic year was still another two months away. Following the advice of a friend from Rezaieh who was living in New York, I headed for Wooster College in the city of Wooster, Ohio, where I met with Dr. [Louis] Holden, the college president,[4] and on his advice began to work for $2/day to shore up my meager capital before classes started.

Rev. Louis E. Holden, Wooster College President 1899-1915



Wooster College campus, Ohio, 1913

Main building, Wooster College

I confess that physical exhaustion tempted me to reach out to my father every day and ask him for financial help, but paternal love notwithstanding, my sense of self-respect compelled and drove me to rely on my body, willpower, and a firm resolve instead.

When the school year finally started, my savings were not enough to cover tuition and living expenses; I therefore arranged my classes in such a way as to devote half of every day to earning money to pay for my general expenses and academic materials.

I completed my freshman year with a tired body but a joyful spirit. I not only succeeded in passing my exams, but several professors who had noted my diligence and disposition extended a level of commendation and grace to me beyond expectation. I then joined a firm in Philadelphia during summer recess to earn wages for my sophomore year, and as a sales representative assigned to a

[4] Wooster College was a private co-educational liberal arts college founded in 1866 as "University of Wooster" by the Presbyterian Church. Louis E. Holden (d. 13 April 1942,) Associate Secretary of the Board of Education of the Presbyterian Church served as president from 1899-1915. Several high school graduates of the American College of Urmia continued their undergraduate studies at Wooster College, and several American alumni of Wooster College taught at Tehran University when it was founded in 1934.

particular city district, began selling goods manufactured by the company. As luck would have it, my sales record exceeded $6,500 in 110 days. I should add that to help needy students, the company manufactured aluminum plates that could be purchased exclusively from students and were not available on the open market or in stores. According to the terms of the contracts, students kept half the revenue from the sale of goods and the company kept the other half. That is how, when summer vacation ended, I had accumulated about $4,000; nonetheless, I continued to work when classes restarted.

Three years of a similar work-study program passed. By then, I had acquired a wider circle of friends and acquaintances and obtained higher proficiency in English vocabulary and language. That is when I decided to complete my fourth year as a senior at the University of Valparaiso in Indiana where, incidentally, more than 800 students were from the East though I was the only one from Iran.

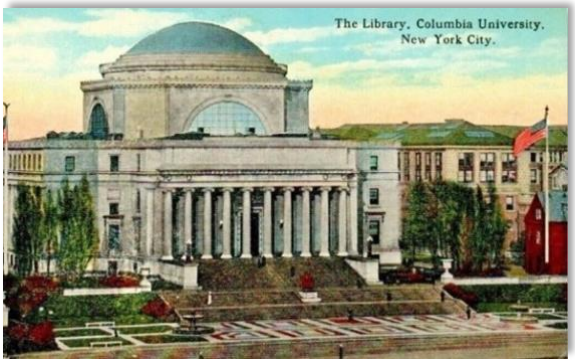
Valparaiso College, Indiana, 30 July 1907

To be brief, in the first five years of my stay in the U.S., my assets did not exceed my routine and necessary expenses enough for me to be able to see movies and plays and indulge in entertaining and refining my spirit like people of wealth; I tried to make use of the screen and stage that I was creating in the course of my own life and spend my time studying and analyzing essential facts instead of on the faces and figures of imaginary actors.

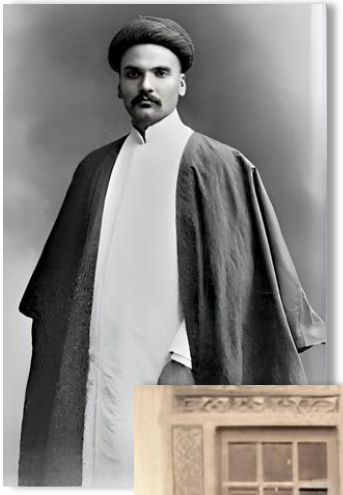
To gain admission to one of the best educational institutions in the U.S. and pursue my studies at Columbia University, I got entangled with Mr. Ali-Qoli Khan Nabil ed-Dowleh, the Iranian Chargé d'affaires in New York. It was agreed that before the start of the academic year, I would organize the jumbled and disorderly documents and files that had piled up at the consulate during his tenure; in turn, he would underwrite my studies at Columbia for a year. Unfortunately, I was not familiar with Iranian officials' principles and after accomplishing my task realized that I had wasted a lifetime and served without any wages or thanks.

Columbia Univ., Morningside Campus, New York

Columbia Univ. Library (1912 postcard)



Fortuitously, Mr. [Hasan] Taqizadeh had also come to the U.S. from London and we, who had met in Rezaieh and become acquainted at the time of his travel—or exile—from Iran to Turkey [in June 1908 when Mohammad-Ali Shah bombed the Majles to end the Constitutionalist order] became housemates for a time.



Equal measure statesman and scholar, Seyyed Hasan Taqizadeh (1878-1970) was raised in a traditional family in Tabriz and trained to be a cleric. In 1889/1900, he attended The American Memorial School of Tabriz, learned English, and secretly, French, and became acquainted with modern thought. He was still a mullah on 6 Oct 1906 when Tabriz merchants elected him to the 1st Majles—the culmination of the Constitutional Revolution. When Mohammad-Ali Shah ascended the throne in August 1907, the Anglo-Russians divided Iran into respective spheres of influence and supported the shah in reinstating despotic rule. On 23 June 1908, the Majles was bombed by the Persian Cossack Brigade led by General Vladimir Liakhov.

Taqizadeh (2nd L) *with Tabriz deputies, 1st Majles, 1906*

Taqizadeh was exiled. He returned in November 1908 but fled again in 1910. In Britain, he pursued Iranian studies with Edward G. Browne at Cambridge University. On 6 June 1913 he left for New York where he met Reza Afshar, then a student at Columbia University. Both being poor, the Iranian Chargé d'affaires Ali-Qoli Khan Nabil ed-Dowleh lodged them in his Catskills summer home. [5] *When WWI erupted in 1914, Taqizadeh came to play a pivotal role in the life of his housemate who was ten years younger but no less patriotic or passionate about education, modernity, and progress.*

While pursuing my studies and research, I took advantage of his presence to go through several volumes of the *History of Islamic Civilization* by the Egyptian [sic] Jorji Zaydan[6] and in return helped improve his English to the best of my abilities. Because I had studied Arabic extensively and at length before going to the U.S., I was not a vexatious student for him. Moreover, socializing with me mitigated his homesickness, and my conversations prompted him to explain Iranian political events; the exchanges helped me understand the political scene in Iran while recounting the stories strengthened his memory.

[5] In his memoir, Taqizadeh writes that to get by in NY, he took on academic odd jobs and Reza Afshar taught Persian to the children of Ali-Qoli Khan "who assumed Afshar to be a Baha'i; out of expediency, Afshar had also professed to be a Baha'i." There is no record or any circumstantial evidence to support either statement. The fact is, Afshar was fervently progressive. As such, he and his Baha'i host would have shared many values in respect to modernity, science, and education, including for women.

[6] Jorji Zaydan, an Eastern Orthodox Christian, was born in 1861 in Beirut Velayat in Ottoman Syria (now Lebanon) and died in Cairo in 1914. Taqizadeh met him in 1905. Zaydan wrote 23 historical novels (one/year) during the *Nahda* to educate Arabs about their own history in an entertaining way and serialized them in his magazine, *al-Hilal*. His five-volume *Tarikh al-Tamaddun al-Islam* was published between 1901-1906.

Reza Afshar (L) and Taqizadeh in NYC, c1914

Ali-Qoli Khan & Florence, 1914

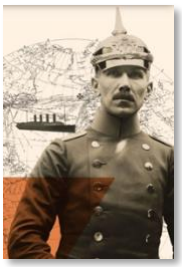
Mahin Banou

Ali-Qoli Khan's niece Mahin Banou (above, far R) was reportedly the first Iranian woman to puruse studies in the U.S. and was featured in the press for advocating women's education.

This situation continued until early 1914 when following the advice of some friends, I had switched my field from medicine to finance and economics; on occasion, I also published articles about Iran in [New York] American [and other] newspapers and responded to articles critical of Iran. Reading Lord Curzon's famous book about Iran and the question of Iran[7] greatly expanded my store of information about Russian and British conflicts and their respective interests in Iran while helping me amass considerable information about tribes in my own country.

Coincidentally, when the late Seqat ol-Islam[8] was hanged in Tabriz [in 1911], I had felt deeply pained and upset by an article an Assyrian from Rezaieh had published in the American press in New York applauding the Russian campaigns in northern Iran and the successes of the Christian creed. I therefor picked up pen and in answering the writer described and criticized several examples of Russian and British oppression in Iran and other countries in the Near East, an article that led to my becoming acquainted with Ambassador Count Johann von Bernstorff,[9] the naval attaché Karl Boy-Ed, and other German officials in the U.S.

Count Bernstorff



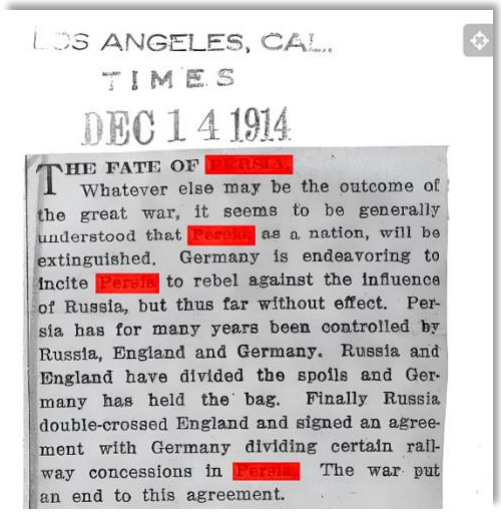
Karl Boy-Ed

With the eruption of WWI after 28 June 1914, British and Russian armies occupied Iran despite its neutrality in the war and conducted their own turf wars for access to natural resources and infrastructure across the country. The conditions were so dire, one ominous syndicated column in the Western press read:

[7] *Persia and the Persian Question,* 2 vols. (1892). George Curzon, Viceroy of India, travelled through Russia and Central Asia during 1888-89 and toured Iran from Sept. 1889-Jan. 1890. He advocated treating Persia as a buffer to prevent Russian encroachment on India, Britain's greatest asset.

[8] Seqat ol-Islam Tabrizi, 50-year-old leader of the Sheikhi sect and a nationalist was hanged 31 Dec 1911 with other constitutionalists when Tabriz was under a Russian siege.

[9] Johann Heinrich Graf von Bernstorff (1862-1939), a German politician who grew up in England until 1873. He was elected to the Reichstag and married the German American Jeanne Luckemeyer. He served diplomatic missions in Constantinople and Cairo and was ambassador to the U.S. from 1908 until 1917 when U.S. relations with Germany were severed by President Woodrow Wilson.



LOS ANGELES, CAL.
TIMES
DEC 1 4 1914

THE FATE OF PERSIA.

Whatever else may be the outcome of the great war, it seems to be generally understood that Persia, as a nation, will be extinguished. Germany is endeavoring to incite Persia to rebel against the influence of Russia, but thus far without effect. Persia has for many years been controlled by Russia, England and Germany. Russia and England have divided the spoils and Germany has held the bag. Finally Russia double-crossed England and signed an agreement with Germany dividing certain railway concessions in Persia. The war put an end to this agreement.

"THE FATE OF PERSIA. Whatever else may be the outcome of the great war, it seems to be generally understood that Persia, as a nation, will be extinguished."

Despairing before the onslaught of imperialist forces, pro-German sentiment grew pervasive among nationalists and the people as a whole.

LEADERS OF RIVAL POWERS AT THE ONSET OF WWI

Britain
H.H. Asquith, PM

Russia
Tsar Nikolai II

France
Pres. H. Poincaré

Japan
Emperor Yoshihito

ALLIED POWERS

Germany
Kaiser Wilhelm II

Austria
Emperor Charles I

Ottoman Empire
Sultan Mehmed V

CENTRAL POWERS

The Germans pressed me to travel to Berlin and galvanize the Muslim Indian and Caucasian prisoners of war in German captivity to go to Turkey and fight the British and the Russians. Thus, I sailed from New York to Holland [on 31 Dec 1914] together with Mr. Taqizadeh, aspiring at the dawn of my

youth to help hapless Iranians, pay my dues to my society, and indirectly fight those who wished ill upon my country and homeland.[10]

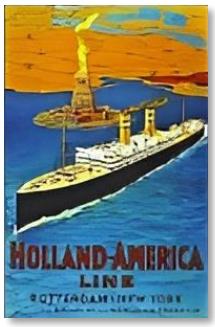
42nd Street & Fifth Avenue, 1913

Downtwon Manhattan & New York Harbor

Rotterdam, a HAL ocean-liner, sailed between New York and Holland starting in 1908.

Holland America Pier at Rotterdam

HAL poster



[10] In an article in the Journal of the Faculty of Literature, University of Tabriz, 6:3 (3 Azar 1333/Dec 1954), Taqizadeh inaccurately claimed that it was he who was first invited by the Germans to go to Berlin and that Afshar had asked to be taken along. Afshar corrected Taqizadeh's account in "Gusheh'i az Tarikh-e Moʿaser/A Slice of Contemporary History" in the same journal 6: 4 (Esfand 1333/Feb 1955): 434-447. Afshar details that he was first invited to meet in an upscale NYC hotel, Room 12, with a German official who had read his New York American articles denouncing Anglo-Russian exploits in Persia and then invited to lunch with Ambassador von Bernstorff at the Plaza Hotel. They were joined by the German military attaché and the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador Konstantin Dumba. Afshar was invited to travel to Berlin and by helping the Allies, indirectly help Persia. He agreed, provided Taqizadeh—whom he had kept apprised of the developments—were included in the mission. A day or two later, funded by the Germans, the two sailed from New York to Rotterdam, from where they reached Berlin. Sixty Germans were also on the steamer with Persian passports provided by an Armenian citizen of Turkey named Topakian, an honorary consul general in New York, to elude British inspectors who would regularly board and remove Germans sailing to Europe.

Among the passengers on the ship was an elderly gentleman accompanied by a very attractive and alluring lady, the man traveling with a Spanish, and the woman with an American passport. A British warship stopped our ocean liner across the U.S. maritime boundary line to conduct a search and after checking the passengers' identities and the cargo, let it sail on. But the inspection was repeated on the British shores (Dover) and the English crew put the elderly gentleman in a boat and hauled him off. He turned out to be the famous German Count Wedel, author of the book, *When I was a German Spy*.

After the above-mentioned man was captured, the beautiful and beguiling woman targeted me out of the twelve passengers traveling first-class and after preliminary introductions said, "Most of the passengers have tried to make friends with me in the past few days and display affections while you have avoided running into me, even accidentally." I replied, "My heart is already pledged elsewhere and pawned, and I have no spare heart to donate toward your love." Long story short, the lady importuned and made me promise to keep her company for the duration of the voyage and to not deny or defy her friendship. She also confessed to being Baroness Lydia von Wedel, wife of the Count Wedel mentioned earlier. Having promised to keep her secret, I continued to cooperate with her to the end of the voyage.

Now, following the advice of a learned friend, I feel compelled, while describing a small segment of the history of my life, to lift the mask of disguise and reveal a slice of that enchanted lady's life to the Almanac's readership. Once we landed in Berlin, it became clear that we had been deceived by the Germans and that their mission in recruiting us was to help reinforce the Indian Independence Committee.

Briefly, the Germans had formed a committee of Indian nationalists comprised of Professor Lala [HarDayal,][11] [Virendranath] Chattopadhyaya,[12] and Abdol-Hafiz [Mohamad Barakatullah Bhopali],[13] and other Hindu and Muslim Indians in Berlin[14] and planned to urge them to foment rebellion and revolution in India. Latching on to the Iranian nationalists' sentiments, they had drawn us to Berlin on a pretext and wanted us to steer the above-mentioned committee and act as the vanguard of that mission.

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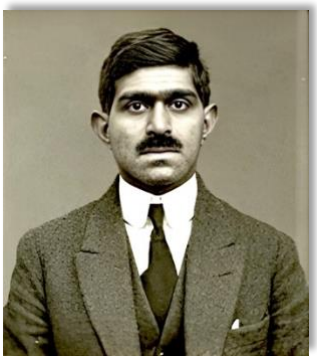
[11] A revolutionary Punjabi anarchist, nationalist, and secular Hindu intellectual, he went to San Francisco in 1911 where he co-founded the Ghadr Party (or Ghadar غدر "rebellion" in Urdu) and weekly paper in 1913. He fomented anti-British rebellion among local Punjabi Sikh immigrants, was arrested, and fled to Berlin.

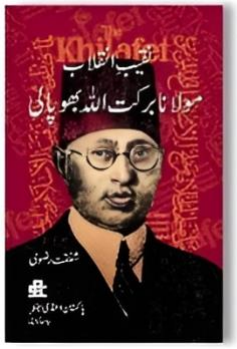
[12] A polyglot and fervent anti-colonialist who left India in 1902 never to return, he helped establish the Berlin Committee in 1914, recruiting Abdol-Hafiz and Har Dayal among others, and in Washington DC negotiated the shipment of arms to India with German Ambassador Heinrich von Bernstorff. He joined the Communist Party in Russia and as an eventual victim of Stalin's Great Purge, was executed in 1937.

[13] Known as Maulana Barkatullah (b. 1854), he was the co-founder of Ghadr and a staunch foe of the British Raj. In 1915, when the first Provisional Government of India was formed in Kabul, Afghanistan, he was named prime minister.

[14] The IIC, initially formed in 1914 by Indian students and called the Berlin-Indian Committee, included the likes of Chempakaraman Pillai, Dr. Jhanendra Das Gupta, and Abinash Bhattacharya. In 1915, Max von Oppenheim, head of Germany's Intelligence Bureau for the East, was appointed to consolidate student and other activist groups against the British. With the help of Johann von Bernstorff, IIC formed an Indo-German-Turkish mission to urge the tribes at the Iran-India border to revolt against the British.



Chattopadhyaya



Barakatullah Bhopali

Lala Har Dayal

Having discerned the above goal and realizing that I had been deceived, I spoke candidly to Count [Friedrich] Pourtalès[15] at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and told him that that was not something we could do and that no patriotic Iranian would be willing to lead the Indian nationalist caravan instead of making an effort to ensure the independence and territorial integrity of his own country and would not prioritize the independence of another country to the liberation of his own nation from enslavement and subservience.

Count Friedrich de Pourtalès

Count Pourtalès replied that in that case, we would have to stay in Berlin until the war ends and per standard protocol, report to the police station once a day. I accepted the Count's threatening views with no fear or anxiety. From that day on, Baron [Max von] Oppenheim[16] was no longer our host and we moved to lodge at the Stein Guest House at Grolmanstrasse #5 to wait in Berlin like prisoners until the war ended.

Max von Oppenheim (R) often dressed in Arab clothing. When named head of Germany's Intelligence Bureau for the East in Berlin in 1914, he wrote a memo urging Sultan Mehmed V to raise a jihad against the enemies of the Ottoman Empire, France and Britain. Arabs nicknamed him Abu Jihad.

The German Foreign Office easily figured out that they had made a mistake in our case and summoned me one more time, this time making a more ludicrous suggestion saying that Baroness Lydia von Wedel has fallen passionately in love with me and that she and I should go to Switzerland and get

[15] Jakob Ludwig *Friedrich* Wilhelm Joachim de Pourtalès (1853 – 1928), aristocrat and diplomat, he arrived in St. Petersburg in 1907 when Russia, Britain, and France formed the Triple Alliance against Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy and served as the German ambassador until the outbreak of WWI in 1914.

[16] Max von Oppenheim (1860-1946) was a diplomat and lawyer from a banking dynasty whose grandfather was a Jewish convert to Catholicism. He learned Arabic and excavated the neolithic site of Tel Halaf in N. Syria in 1911-1913.

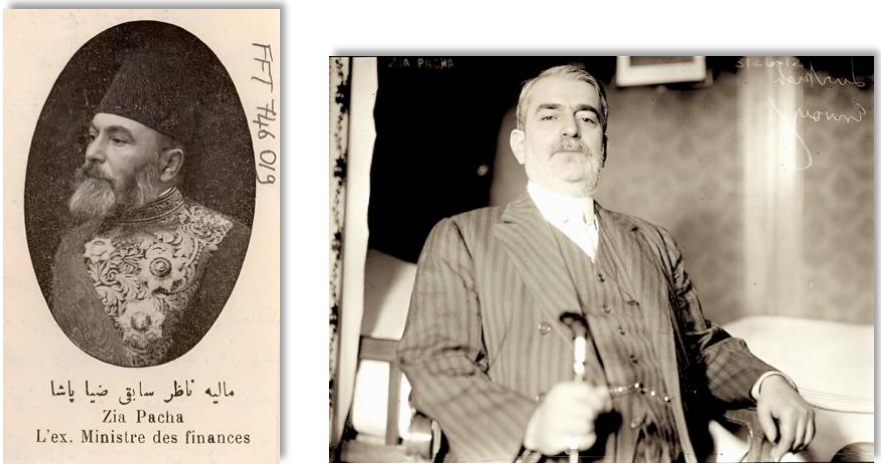
married at the Persian Consulate and after a short stay, make a request to travel to London and after entering Britain, ask the authorities for permission to visit prisoner of war detention centers as citizens of neutral countries so that said lady might be able to have a talk with her first husband and collect some information.

On hearing these words, I was naturally shocked and felt deeply upset and sorry as I realized the depth of Western nations' misperception of Easterners. 'My country is not at war,' I replied, 'and I loathe espionage, especially if it holds no benefits for my country and my people; there is no way I would take on this assignment, so don't bother to insist and don't keep pressing, for it is futile.'

Unfortunately, my interlocutor was not convinced and went on to speak of the lady's goodness and grace and the magnetism of her eyes and the loveliness of her looks and painted me as the luckiest human being that a femme fatale heartthrob like her should have fallen for me.

A few days later, having given up hope of overpowering me with his words and speech, he reached out to the Turkish ambassador [to the U.S.] Mr. Yusuf Zia Pasha, and by token of religion and Islam, tried to impose the lady upon my shoulders and espionage upon my mental faculties.

Fortunately, the eminent ambassador's passion and reasoning did not impair my decision or sap my will, since I have always believed as I do now that there is no profession and occupation in human institutions baser than espionage, though in Iran, spying against the country on behalf of outsiders has always been a precondition for advancement and an affidavit of competency and a proof of aptitude and talent, and may still be so today.



Yusuf Zia Pasha, ex-Minister of Finance, and Ambassador to the U.S., 1914

At any rate, having lost hope in achieving their specific objective, the Germans agreed to let us organize an association in Berlin and begin designing the future of the Iranian nation with a proper plan and method while supporting the Indian committee.

We lacked the manpower to achieve our purpose; our only option was for me to travel from Berlin to Switzerland from where, in person or by correspondence, I invited Mr. [Hossein] Kazemzadeh

"Iranshahr"[17] from Cambridge, England, and Mr. Nasrollah Jahangir and Mssrs. [Mohammad Ali] Jamalzadeh and Saʿdullah Darvish and the late [Ali-Naqi] Ravandi from Switzerland, and Mssrs. [Mahmoud] Ashrafzadeh [Tabrizi] and [Ebrahim] Pourdavoud from France to collaborate and congregate and consult about the issue at hand and took them along to Berlin to form a committee.

Hossein Kazemzadeh and the first issue of "Iranshahr, An Illustrated Scientific and Literary Magazine," being a foundational publication that advocated new cultural paradigms for a modern Iranian society.

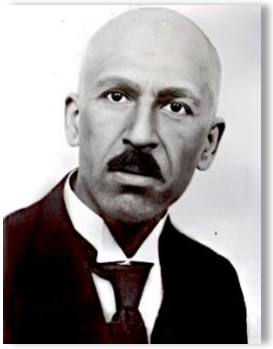
M.-Ali Jamalzadeh

Ebrahim Pourdavoud

Morteza Ravandi

Saʿdollah Darvish

Mohammad Qazvini



Upon their arrival in Berlin, we learned that Mr. Taqizadeh had also summoned Mssrs. Esmail Yekani and Haj Esmail Amir-Kheezi, and the late Mirza Esmail Nobari as well as Mr. Reza Tarbiat from Istanbul to Berlin; Mr. Ezzatollah Hedayat who was a Berlin-based student was also added to the above group and the [Iranian Nationalist] Committee's membership was rounded off.

[17] Kazemzadeh (b. 1884 in Tabriz) was a learned constitutionalist who came to be known as *Iranshahr* after the monthly periodical he published in Berlin (26 June 1919 -1927) with Pourdavoud and others. Proficient in French, English, German, and Arabic, he believed that Iran's chief problem lay in its culture.

In a written agreement, the Germans pledged to recognize Iran's sovereignty and independence in case of victory [in WWI] and should Iran enter the war on Germany's side, provide financial and moral support to Iran and the people. In turn, the Committee pledged to form a national government in Iran through engagement and widespread propaganda and uphold the will and disposition of that established sovereign state; and in the event said national government decides to support the Allies in opposition to the Central Powers, the Committee shall decline to submit to the sovereign state's direction and position.

To prepare the conditions and follow through with the pledge, the central committee in Berlin was divided into separate missions: Messrs.. Yekani and Kazemzadeh [Iranshahr] and Nasrullah Jahangir left for Tehran via Russia, and Messrs.. Nobari and Amir-Kheezi and [Ebrahim] Pourdavoud went to Istanbul via Iraq, and I myself headed for Vienna to conduct negotiations with the Austrian government.[18]

My sojourn in Vienna lasted about a month. The Austrians finally agreed to recognize and respect Iran's territorial integrity in case of victory just as the Germans had pledged to the [Berlin] Committee. I had kept Minister Plenipotentiary, the late [Mirza Mostafa Khan] Safa ol-Mamalek, generally informed about these developments.

Mostafa Khan Safa ol-Mamalek was presented as Persia's envoy to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in a letter (below) *from Ahmad Shah Qajar congratulating Karl Franz Josef (Charles I) on his coronation on 21 November 1916 photographed below. Defeat of the Central Powers in WWI on 11 Nov 1918 ended the centuries-old reign of the Habsburg dynasty (1282-1918).*

Ahmad Shah Qajar

Charles I coronation

[18] Afshar's mission on his trips to Vienna and Constantinople was to persuade the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires to pledge, as had Germany, that in the event of their victory against the Allies, they would respect Iran's independence and sovereignty.

Ahmad Shah (C) *with War Minister Reza Khan* (far L) *whose coronation as Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1925 ended the Qajar dynasty (1789-1925)*

I shall never forget his insistence that I meet with Amir Bahador[19] in Vienna; based on letters exchanged between him and the late Mohammad-Ali Shah and Samad Khan Shoja ed-Dowleh [Moqaddam] Maragheh'i [20] I found Amir Bahador to be a fanatic Muslim individual and a patriotic Iranian. Of course, he also criticized Field Marshal Hindenburg's military campaign tactics, but there is no need to recount those here.

Amir Bahador-e Jang

Mohammad-Ali Shah

Shoja ed-Dowleh Maraghe'i (C)

After finishing my task in Vienna, I went to Istanbul via Romania and Bulgaria for negotiations with Ottoman authorities. My arrival coincided with the occupation of Azarbaijan by the Turkish army. Contrary to protocol, the Turks publicized news about Azarbaijan as if domestic and charged the news agencies for their dissemination. It is a great pity that the Turks did not recognize the political sovereignty of disparate Muslim nations and took Muslim solidarity to mean all Muslim nations should be subsumed into theirs. They also entertained curious and strange notions in regards Azarbaijan whose people speak Turkish. Following many exchanges and arguments, the Turkish authorities agreed to leave us alone and conceded that Azarbaijan and the people of Azarbaijan shall maintain their [Iranian] identity and not forsake themselves and their society and history and nationality.

[19] Hossein Pasha Khan (1845-1918) titled *Amir Bahador* by Nasser ed-din Shah in 1893, was minister of war under Mozaffar ed-din Shah and Mohammad-Ali Shah.

[20] Governor of Maragheh (1890-1911) under Mohammad-Ali Shah and Ahmad Shah, and of Azarbaijan (1911-1914) under Ahmad Shah.

I shall never forget Anvar Pasha[21] saying, 'You and I are cousins; how long must Persian literature prevent you from embracing your nationality?' I responded to him, "Honorable Pasha, just as I have no doubt in our not being cousins, there is likewise no doubt in my mind in Azarbaijanis not being Turks. Moreover, you are at present fighting a war against the Allies; the future of the war and victory is unknown. Why do you waste your precious time by causing divisions among friends instead of striving to attract allies? This is not the right time to be parsing and examining racial questions. In my opinion, it would be better for now to spend your time safeguarding Muslim nations and bringing about unity and solidarity and not disrupt the order of other people's nationality and ethnicity.

To cut the story short, the Turks were finally persuaded, and the late Enver Pasha and the Turkish government issued an order to the effect that news about Azarbaijan should be published in the foreign section of newspapers and that the same principle should be applied and maintained in broadcasts and all correspondence.

Enver Pasha (1911)

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1916)

When I had completed my assignment in Istanbul, I sailed to Trablus (Tripoli) via Aleppo and from there took a boat to Falluja together with Mr. Amir-Kheezi and the late Nobari and a couple of others. To describe the journey on a *shakhtour,* a square wooden structure that is carried along by the current and absent any shelter from the sun causes travelers much mental and physical pain, will delay and inconvenience the reader. Suffice it to say that we made a safe passage to Falluja from Aleppo in eighteen days, rested there overnight, and arrived in Baghdad the following day and checked into Hotel Babylon. In Baghdad, we met with the late Akhtar and set up the Rastkhiz[22] newspaper under the editorship of Mr. Pourdavoud [aka Gol] after which I hurriedly left for Iran.

Rastkhiz, Year 1, No. 1

[21] Ismail Enver (1881-1922) "hero" of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, minister of war and de facto chief of the general staff (3 Jan 1914 - 4 Oct 1918) who brought his country into WWI on the side of Germany. The Ottoman Empire capitulated to the Allies on 30 Oct 1918. The Armenian genocide of 1915 was his initiative.

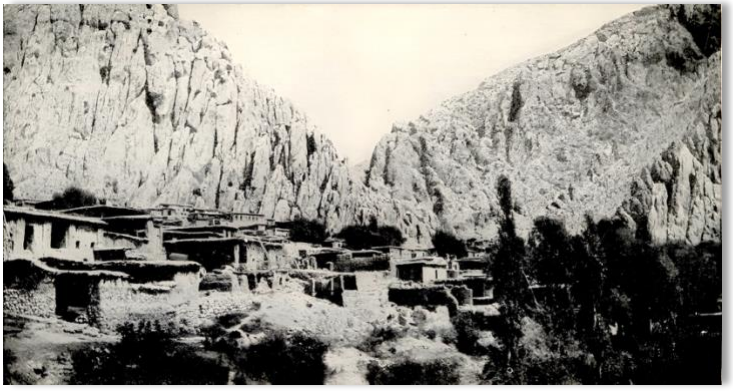
[22] *Rastkhiz* was funded by the German government to help the Berlin Nationalist Committee unify Iranians against Tsarist Russia and Britain. A total of 25 issues were published: 1-11 in Baghdad starting on 7 Aug 1915, 12-23 in Kermanshah, and 24-25 in Baghdad. The last of the 16 extant issues is dated 25 Feb 1916. Pourdavoud moved Rastkhiz from Baghdad to Kermanshah in opposition to the Ottoman concept of 'Islamic Unity,' which erased Iranian sovereignty, and in support of the *Mohajerin* (émigrés)—a group of parliamentarians who had fled Russian-besieged Tehran and formed a Provisional Government in Kermanshah led by Nezam ol-Saltaneh Mafi where they enjoyed German support. See Mansoureh Ettehadieh (Nezam-Mafi), *Rastkhiz: An Unknown Newspaper* (Tehran University Scientific Journals (4), No. 1. Serial No. 498, Farvardin 1382/2003) https://journals.ut.ac.ir/article_10996.html.

As soon as I reached Qasr-e Shirin, I was prohibited from continuing my journey by order of Djemal Bey, a Turkish official in the army that Hüseyin Ra'uf Bey (Rauf Orbay) was leading from Iran to Afghanistan, the excuse being that his commander is fighting the Iranians in the vicinity of Karand. I therefore had to stay in Qasr-e Shirin for a few days waiting for the skirmish to be over so I may be permitted to travel to my destination.

Kermanshah Province, western Iran

Qasr-e Shirin, Kermanshah

Karand in Kurdish Dalahu County, Kermanshah



Ra'uf Orbay in 1913

In 1915, Ra'uf Orbay, a naval captain appointed commander of the Persian Campaign by Enver Pasha led the Ottoman army into Kermanshah. Under Mafi's leadership, the united tribes repelled the army and following heavy casualties on both sides, forced them to retreat to the border.

Four years later, Orbay joined Ataturk's movement and in 1922 became the first prime minister of Turkey.

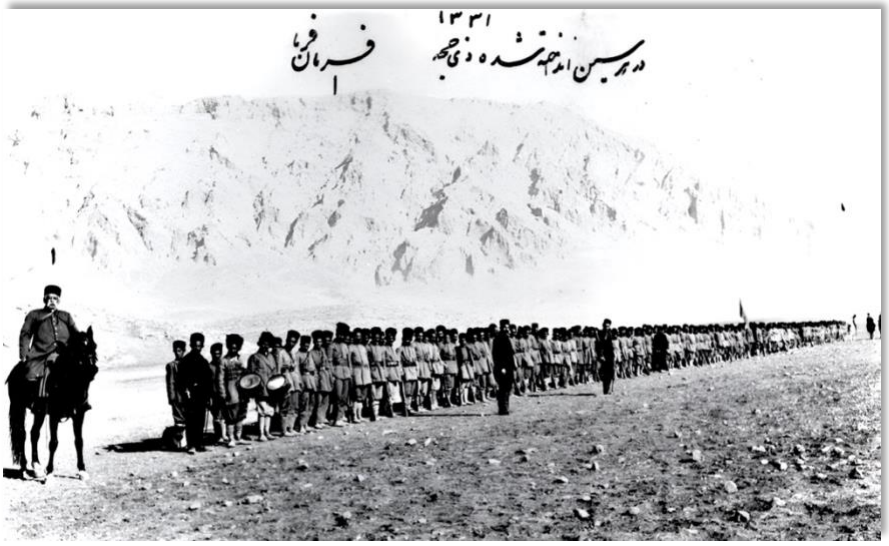
Ra'uf Orbay with Ataturk (L) and *as Prime Minister in 1922*

Ali Ihsan Bey Commander of the Ottoman Corps 13 in Hamadan, Persia (seated below)

Oberst Ali Ichsan Bey, der Kommandierende des 13. Ott. A.-K. in Hamadan, Persien

Djemal Bey announced the end of the tussle and let me travel on. But immediately upon arrival in Pa'in Tāq, I was arrested by the Turks and for no reason held under surveillance in the corner of a ruined caravanserai for seventeen days. On day eighteen, I was taken by the Turkish officer Adham Bey before the general, who had summoned me. After reading his government's recommendation about me, Mr. Hüseyin Ra'uf said, 'You're wasting your time going to Tehran; nothing is going on in Tehran; a bunch of treasonous democrats have taken control over there and have no interest in friendly relations with me and my men and will not let us cross over to Afghanistan via Iran. The governor of the western provinces Prince Abdol-Hossein Mirza Farman-Farma is plotting against us. In my opinion, it's best for you to travel to Azarbaijan with fighters that I will put at your disposal and try to deter Azarbaijanis from dereliction of their national duties and not let themselves be shackled by the allure of Persian literature. Of course, I shall cover all your expenses myself and shall duly recognize all your services.

Farman-Farma leading his troops in Hansin, eastern Kermanshah



I said, "Mr. Hossein Ra'uf, this complex racial problem was previously resolved between Mr. Enver Pasha and me in Istanbul; this is not the moment to have that discussion, and you ought not to be instigating schism and enmity among Muslim nations." A man happened to be present in the room and was listening to our

conversation very attentively. He said, 'So and so, I have completely lost hope in the future of Iran and don't wish to see our Turkish Azarbaijani brethren remain gripped in the claws of that spineless nation and be ousted from the lineage of Turks and Pan Turkism. Of course, given that you are young and a Turk, you certainly bear responsibility and an obligation to respect your national duty and conscience.' I replied, "Mr. Ra'uf, not only am I not a Turk and the future of Iran is not as dark and murky as you imagine, the intelligence and the talents and the history of the ancient nation of Iran will never allow Iranians to submit to subjugation and slavery; and should heavenly angels plan to attack to cut off Azarbaijan from Iran, I am ready to fight and slaughter the heavenly angels."

Mr. Hüseyin Ra'uf grinned scornfully and said, 'You thought you could safely penetrate Iran from my compound thinking I did not know that you are an Armenian who has murdered Mirza Reza Khan Afshar and taken his papers and wants to escape from my clutches by assuming his name!' Totally taken aback on hearing those words and feeling confounded, I refrained from continuing to talk and reason and explain even as the gentleman casually ordered that I be taken back to the detention center. As soon as I returned to the detention center, the man that I had seen in the Turkish army commander's quarters came to see me. When he walked up, he kissed my cheek and said, 'Son, I watched you argue and face off with Mr. Hüseyin Rauf and enjoyed your candor and your manly defense of Iran and Iranians. Regrettably, I only have 62 Azarbaijani fighters in this Islamic camp and based on that headcount, cannot battle the Turks to rescue you from their clutches.' I asked, 'What is your name? Please introduce yourself.' He said, 'My name is Ebrahim, and I am from Khoy. After you were sent away, Mr. Hüseyin Rauf ordered that you be hanged tomorrow. I have rushed over to say that should you manage to escape from the detention center tonight, an attendant will be at your disposal by the bridge with a horse and a rifle.'

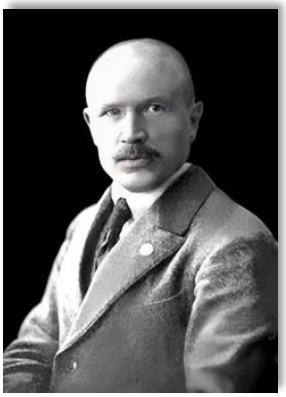
As luck would have it, I had success in that matter; he, too, fulfilled his promise. The Turks retained all my belongings, plus a communique addressed to Prime Minister Mostofi ol-Mamalek by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs that had been entrusted to me.

Mirza Hasan Ashtiani, Mostofi ol-Mamalek (b. 1871) served intermittently as Ahmad Shah's prime minister during WWI. His secret negotiations with Germany during his third term (Aug-Dec 1915) pledging to enter the war provided Germany supplied military and financial support and guaranteed Iran's independence and territorial integrity in case of victory were discovered by the Allies.

Twenty-four hours after my escape, I managed to reach Sardar Moqtader of the Sanjabi tribe. A short time after learning about what had transpired, Sardar Moqtader summoned a Sanjabi tribal cavalry and ordered them to attack Rauf Bey's soldiers. A summary battle ensued; the defeated Rauf Bey left Iranian territory and I was compelled to return to Baghdad to protest the Turks' behavior. Once there, I met the governor of Baghdad Suleiman Nazif Pasha accompanied by the Iranian Consul General Mokarram o-Sultan A'lam and described how Hüseyin Rauf had treated me. What came to light was that Hüseyin Rauf who was a member of the Freedom and Accord Party was at odds with the Union and Progress Party and his agenda conflicted with Enver Pasha's. While protesting Hüseyin Ra'uf's actions to the governor

I said, 'Your army chief repeatedly gave me reassurances [of safety] on his honor; it turned out he intended to have me hanged.' He replied, '*Effendi* Hüseyin Ra'uf had nothing cheaper than his honor to give away.'

Anyway, I returned to Iran from Baghdad together with the late Ashrafzadeh, Sa'dullah Khan, and others. On arriving in Kermanshah, we learned that [Max Otto] Schünemann, the German consul in Kermanshah, had recruited a group and set up shop and that the Russian and British governments were also intent on establishing their consulate offices in Kermanshah as soon as possible.



Max Otto Schünemann was sent by Germany in 1906 to teach modern manufacturing in Iran. During WWI, he was appointed consul and managed to drive Allied forces from Kermanshah.

He was recalled in 1918 but returned in 1924 and left an impressive legacy of textile factories, wood, electric and iron plants and other key industries in Tabriz, Esfahan, and Hamadan. In 1941, he was sent to an internment camp in Adelaide, Australia, and released in 1946.

The Allies' purpose in establishing consular offices in Kermanshah is to block any potential Turco-German assistance to Iran; a [Russian] general heading a contingent of Persian Cossacks has been assigned to accomplish that purpose in Kermanshah.

Cossack brigades have entered the home of Farajullah Khan Sari-Aslan in Kangāvar joined by the Russian Consul Cherkasov and the British Consul McDowell; a contingent of nationalists is advancing toward Sahneh to confront them.

Farajullah Khan Sari-Aslan (seated, 2nd R), *Sepahbod Mohammad Khan Kouipal* (in uniform) *and Amanollah Khan Sari-Aslan in Kangāvar*

The outcome of the nationalists' battle was that the Cossack brigade sent by the Russian and British consuls was routed; the nationalists captured Kangāvar and I was wounded in the scrimmage. All my belongings, including the dispatch prepared by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs that I had been carrying and which the Turks had seized was returned to me in Kermanshah by the Turks via Hasan Roshani Bey; he was a native of Kars (NE Turkey) and a competent Turkish official who had a long-standing relationship with the late Aqa Seyyed Mohammad-Reza Mosāvāt.

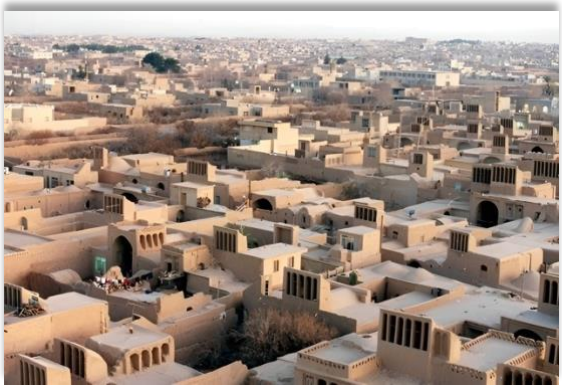
Mohammad Reza Shirazi, Mosavāt ("Equality") after the radically pro-constitutional weekly that he published in Tehran starting 13 Oct 1907. When the Majles was bombed, the paper was banned, but publication restarted on 23 Jan 1909.

Mosavāt (1) 21: 1.
Circulation 3,000

While battles were underway, Ehsanullah Khan arrived with a message from the central government, owing to which I left for Tehran a few days later and delivered the letter from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the late Mostofi.

In Tehran, my former colleagues, meaning those who had already returned from Berlin, formed a governing committee composed of Messrs.. Soleiman Mirza [Eskandari], Hamid ol-Mulk, Mosāvāt, and Seyyed Jalil Ardabili. The committee's goal was to win over the tribes and unify the population; to that end, it dispatched enterprising individuals across the country. I was sent to Iraq to mediate conflicts between the Democrats and the Moderates[23] and together with Count Kanitz,[24] the military attaché at the German embassy, we went to Borujerd.

Borujerd, Lorestan Province, southeast of Kermanshah



[23] Two parties formed during the Constitutional movement in 1908. The Democrats advocated a radical socialist agenda and the separation of religion and state, led by Ebrahim Hakimi, Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, Hossein-Qoli Navvab, the Qajar prince Soleiman Mirza Eskandari, Vahid ol-Molk, Seyyed Mohammad-Reza Mosāvāt, and Mohammad Khiabani. The Moderates اعتداليون were conservatives led by Morteza-Qoli Naini, Seyyed Mohammad-Sadeq Tabatabaie, and Ali-Mohammad Dolatabadi, supported by the majority of the ulama and the merchant class and by Abdol-Hossein Farman-Farma, Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda, and Mohammad Mosaddeq.

[24] The 73-year-old Georg Karl Elias Graf von Kanitz (b. 1842) of the German Reichstag, had traveled across Iran since April 1915 to build pro-German alliances among tribal leaders. He confronted the Cossack Brigade in Tehran in early November 1915 and a few weeks later was defeated at Beed-Sorkh near Kangāvar. Feeling overpowered by General Nikolai Baratov's regular Russian army, he is thought to have committed suicide on 15 January 1916.

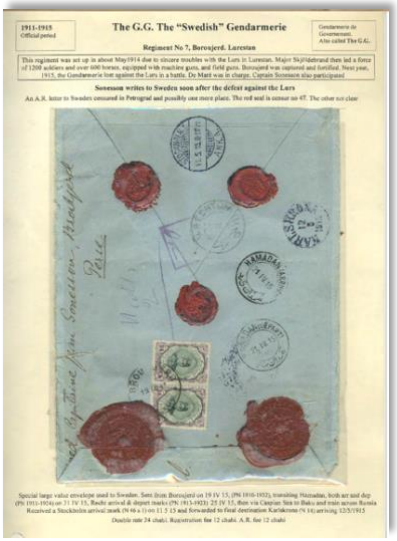
Count Kanitz

The late Nezam ol-Saltaneh was preoccupied with the Beiranvandis' (Lori tribe) battles in Aleshtar. Our mission in traveling to Aleshtar was to win over Nezam ol-Saltaneh and the governor of Posht-kuh and prevail upon the tribes in Lorestan for unity.

After a few days' stop in Borujerd, we went [westward] to Aleshtar with Mr. Ali-Asghar Khan, the late Nezam ol-Saltaneh's second son, via Nahavand. The Swedish head of the Borujerd Gendarmerie Major [Nielsen] De Mare accompanied us on this trip.

General Harald Hjalmar (standing far L in Persia, 1911, & seated C) *a Swede contracted to patrol Iran's bandit-ridden highways, built the Persian gendarmerie and grew it into a police and military force. In 1914, Major Skjoldebrand led the Borujerd gendarmerie Regiment No. 7 with 1, 200 soldiers and 600 horses equipped with machine and field guns and captured Borujerd.*

In 1915, Major Nielsen De Mare leading the Borujerd gendarmerie lost against the Lorestan tribes that favored protecting British interests—oil fields, roads, and transportation. A sealed letter sent by his fellow officer Sonessen to Sweden in 1915 reporting the defeat to the Lori tribes was intercepted in Petrograd and never reached its destination.


The G.G. The "Swedish" Gendarmerie
Regiment No 7, Borujerd. Lurestan
Sonesson writes to Sweden soon after the defeat against the Lurs

After reaching our destination, we spent several days in discussions with Mr. Nezam ol-Saltaneh; he fully came around and hostilities between the Beiranvandis and the nationalist camp came to an end. Nezam ol-Saltaneh considered the support of the governor [of Borujerd] crucial for ensuring security and the success of the

operations; we therefore held follow-up discussions with the governor. The governor tried his best to deceive us and declined to speak with candor.

De Mare-trained gendarmes fighting pro-British tribes in Lorestan

One evening, one of the governor's eleven sons approached me and said, 'My father is hoodwinking you. The English Colonel [Arnold] Wilson[25] is in my father's house right now; my father has sold himself out to the British. If you promise that the central government will recognize me as governor in the place of my father, I'm willing to kill my father.' Aware that murdering the governor would aggravate the differences and animosities between his family and the Lorestan tribes, I expressed strong disagreements with him. My dissent led to arguments, for Major De Mare and Kanitz were in agreement with the governor's son. Fortunately, Nezam ol-Saltaneh who was familiar with the local environment backed my position, and the others were compelled to acquiesce.

Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson (b. 1884) had overseen the historic oil discovery in Takht-e Soleiman in 1908. In 1915, he led the Turco-Persian Frontier Commission out of Basra as Britain moved troops from India to Ottoman territories through the Persian Gulf. He was nicknamed "The Despot of Mess-Pot" for advocating fair representation of Arabs, Turks, Turkmen, Sunnis, Shi'a and Christians, in the government in Iraq, then known by its Greek name, Mesopotamia.

After continuous negotiations, the governor of Lorestan agreed to defend his locale against foreign incursions using his own financial resources and we headed for Tehran via Namak Gouran, which was the shortest route between Borujerd and Soltanabad. The late Mostofi ol-Mamalek was not unaware of the developments.

Once we arrived in the capital, we learned that the Russian and British ambassadors had been negotiating with the government and had pledged that if Iran declared war against Central European countries and Turkey, they would grant Iraq to Iran. [To eliminate the constitutionalist resistance, General Nikolai Baratov led a Cossack brigade toward Tehran, which reached Karaj on 7 Nov 1915].

[25] His book, *The Persian Gulf: An Historical Sketch From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* appeared in 1928. His *S.W. Persia: Letters and Diary of a Young Political Officer 1907-1914*, was published posthumously.

Baratov (C) *with Russian & British officers—the Anglo-Russian co-ravaging of Iran*

General Vladimir Baratov

[On 10 Nov 1915], wishing to prove that public opinion was against the Allied powers' territorial and political self-interests, the late Mostofi ol-Mamalek sent a message to the Committee [of National Defense] overnight requesting that they and a group of esteemed and influential constitutionalists migrate to Qom. [In response, the *Mohajerin*, Emigrés—forty-four deputies, a multitude of writers, journalists, merchants, and contingents of gendarmes, even common folk—fled Tehran].

Unfortunately, the Emigrés and the duly deployed gendarmes, defenseless against Baratov's militant Cossacks, were forced to flee to Kashan and from there to Esfahan. The outcome of this emigration upended the late Mostofi's plan and breached the agreement with the Germans, which elicited a song by 'Aref with the refrain, "From Qom to Kashan / The ship is a wreck my dear."

'Aref Qazvini (b. 1882), Constitutionalist poet and songwriter

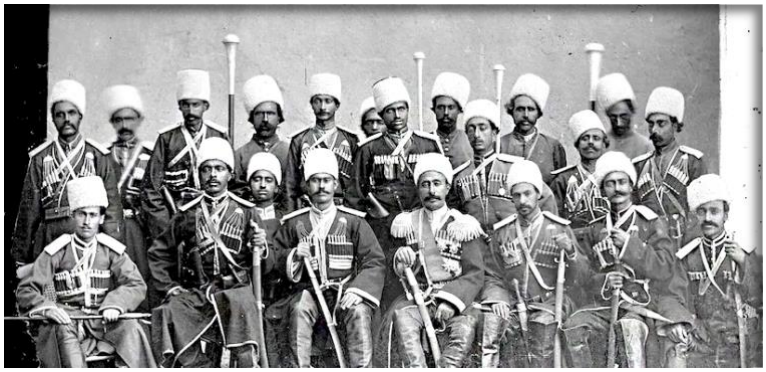
After the group entered Esfahan, a brawl erupted between the Fadaiyan (Amir Heshmat) and others over a woman and other issues; in the end, the group started toward Lorestan [and on to the capital of Kermanshah where they formed a Provisional Government headed by the fiercely anti-British governor of Lorestan Nezam ol-Saltaneh Mafi] [with the prime minister tenuously seated in Tehran.]

Nezam ol-Saltaneh Mafi (C) *and his six-member cabinet in Kermanshah, ministers of Foreign Affairs, War, Interior, Post and Telegraph, Finance, and Justice (Seyyed Hossein Modarress, in a turban).*

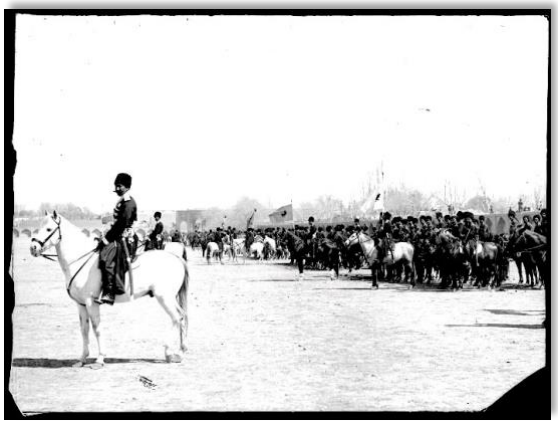
After the Emigrés left for Qom, the Russians and the British began preparations to follow up on their promises. But the Germans beat the British by delivering funds via "Hoffman" in Qom right away and obliged the Provisional Government to dispatch forces to Mosalla (city district in Hamadan) to fight the Persian Cossack Brigade.

The Persian Cossack Brigade (Kazak, meaning "free person" in Turkish) was formed by Nasser ed-Din Shah in 1879. Modeled after the Imperial Russian Army's Caucasian Cossack regiments, it was headed by Russian officers with a Caucasian-Persian mix in the rank and file until 1920.

General Vladimir Liakhov was appointed Military Governor of Tehran by Mohammad-Ali Shah. On 23 June 1908, he ordered the bombing of the 1st Majles, executed constitutionalist leaders, and placed the capital under martial law. Liakhov's command ended in July 1909.



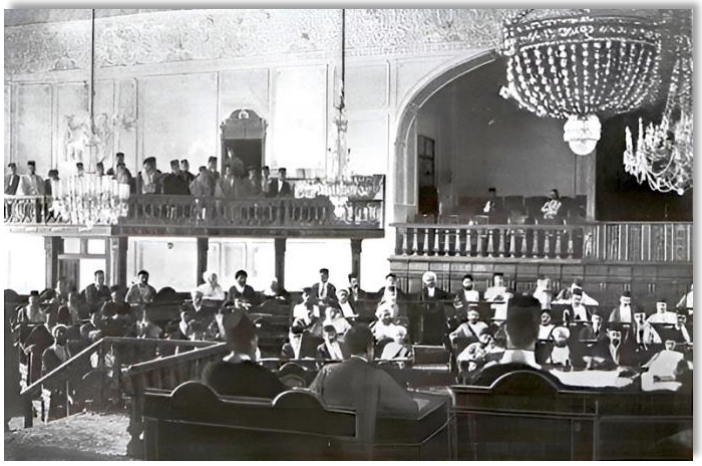
General Alexander Khan Setkhania led the unit of Persian Cossacks that bombed the Majles.



Setkhanian was born to Armenian parents in Tabriz and after completing his studies in Moscow became a naturalized Russian citizen. In 1915, he was promoted to chief of staff of the Persian Cossack Brigade (R).

The 1st Majles (1906) provided for the direct election of 156 deputies, 60 of them from Tehran.

Majles interior



Mafi's Provisional Government failed in its mission and fell apart. When the late Mohammad-Vali Khan Khalatbari Tonekaboni, *Sepahsalar*, formed a cabinet, tracts were distributed denouncing the Fadaiyan as mutineers and traitorous.

Revolving Prime Ministers, 1915-1916

Mostofi ol-Mamalek
18 Aug – 24 Dec 1915

Farman-Farma
25 Dec 1915 – 1 Mar 1916

Sepahsalar Tonekaboni
5 Mar – 25 Aug 1916

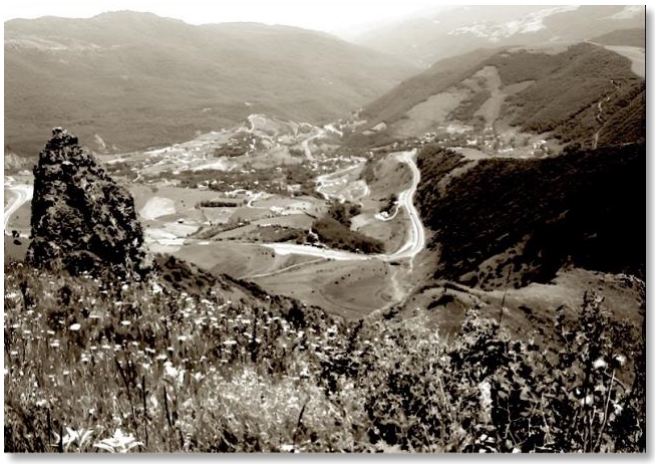
Sepahsalar-e Aʿzam-e Tonekaboni (R, with cane)
Nikolai Baratov (in white papaq)

Divisions grew among the Emigrés as well. Nezam ol-Saltaneh was pro-Turks, the late Soleiman Mirza [Eskandari] was pro-German, and another group was against both and insisted that according to the agreement Iranians must support the central government's decision. It must also be noted that after representatives of Russia and Britain approached the late Mostofi ol-Mamalek —who had urged and instigated the emigration to Qom—and gave him full assurances, he dispatched Mr. Malek ol-Sho'ara [Bahar] and asked the Emigrés to return to Tehran. Regrettably, personal ambitions or other motives prevented the group from complying with the request of the commander on whose order emigration come about in the first place.

Soleiman Mirza Eskandari

Mohammad-Taghi Bahar, Malek ol-Sho'ara

After crossing Lorestan, the Emigrés managed to reach Baghdad after enormous hardships, and after being fortified by the Turks, once again headed for Iran.



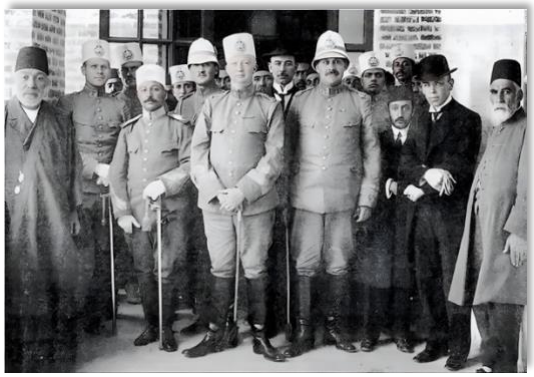
At the Bid-Sorkh Pass [R, near Sahneh, Kermanshah] they clashed with General Bicherakkov and Baratov. The gendarmerie, which constituted the Emigrés' main force, suffered heavy casualties.

Lazar Bicherakhov led a regiment under Nikolai Baratov, head of the Terek Cossacks who are named after Terek River which flows east from northern Georgia through Russia into the Caspian Sea.

I returned to Tehran as I disagreed with the Emigrés and remained in hiding for a few days. It turned out the government was out to arrest me. So informed by the late Ostovar (Mirza Ahmad Khan,) Westdahl's deputy police chief, I went from Tehran to Qazvin and with the help of the late Salim Izadi crossed the Russian camp toward Gilan and joined the *Jangalis* (lit., "jungle folk").[26]

[26] Jamshid Behnam writes in *The Berliners: Iranian Intellectuals in Berlin (1396/2017),* "After Germany's defeat in WWI, some of the group did not return to Berlin, among them, Reza Afshar and [Sa'dullah] Darvish; (these two later went to the jungles of Mazandaran and joined the late Mirza Kauchak Khan and collaborated with him for a time."

Johan Carl Gustav Westdahl, Swedish officer who built Tehran's police department ("nazmiyeh").



Not long after, the Jangalis reorganized as Bolshevism formed in Russia. Baratov and Bicherakhov's armies began returning to their homeland, leaving behind a large volume of weapons and ammunition. The withdrawal of Tsarist armies from Iran boosted the Jangalis' supply of arms and men.

At this time, Britain sent a group of Indian Sikhs and pagan Africans to Iran under the command of General Dunsterville for the purpose of fighting the Ottomans who had entered Georgia under the command of Nouri Pasha. The Jangali Islamic Unity Council blocked the group from marching toward Baku via Gilan, resulting in heavy fighting between the British contingent and the Jangalis, from Manjil to Emamzadeh Hashem. The Jangalis were defeated and left isolated in the forest. The British triumphantly dispatched a requisite force to Baku but were vanquished by Nouri Pasha and returned to Gilan.

Major General Lionel C. Dunsterville (far L) *formed Dunsterforce in December 1917 to secure the Baku oil fields when Russian armies left Iran after the October Revolution. He recruited the counter-revolutionary Lazar Bichernakhov whose 12,000 Cossacks defeated the Jangalis at Manjil in June 1918. The Dunsterforce ultimately failed in its mission and was disbanded in September 1918.*

Given the late Mirza Kouchak Khan's popular image in Iran as a nationalist, the British were interested in arranging a coup d'état with him in the lead and for that reason sent a few representatives to the Jangalis and asked for a meeting with him.

Mirza Kouchak ("junior") Khan was born Youness Ostad-Sarvie to Mirza Bozorg ("senior") in 1880 in Rasht.

It was decided to meet at Ātashgah, which is 6 km from Rasht. Representatives of both sides, Mirza Kouchak Khan and Haji Ahmad [Kasma'i] and Mr. Mir Mansour Rashti and I and the late Dr. Abol-Qassem Khan Farid [Lahijani][27] were selected and entered discussions with the British delegation.

The British included the manager of the Imperial Bank of Rasht [R.S.] Oakshott, George Stokes (whose hiring by the American Morgan Shuster had elicited a Russian ultimatum that led to Shuster's dismissal from Persia), and Colonel Smyles. The Russian [Basil] Nikitin was also present.[28] A pact was concluded following extended negotiations conducted by me and Dr. Farid.

Imperial Bank of Persia, Tehran 1902

One Toman note issued in Yazd

The British-owned Imperial Bank of Persia (est. 1889) grew branches in 24 cities by 1928 and also issued bank notes. The Rasht branch was shut down in 1920 and re-opened after government forces retook the town from the Jangalis at the end of June 1921.

R.S. Oakshott. Courtesy of HSBC Archive

Major George Stokes (R), a Persian-speaking British officer. In 1911, Morgan Shuster tried to hire him as head of a 12,000-member gendarmerie to enforce tax collection.

[27] Dr. Farid and other physicians, Ali Khan Shafa and Mansour Bavar, used mobile hospitals and until it burned down, the National Hospital in Rasht that had 24 beds for men and 2 for women.

[28] Basil Nikitin, born in 1885 in Poland, which was then part of the Russian Empire, studied Persian at the Lazarev Institute in Russia. He served as vice-consul in Rasht in 1911 and as consul in Urmia in 1915 where he met with the Assyrian Patriarch Shimun XIX Benyamin to discuss Assyrian troops joining the Imperial Russian Army and became something of an expert in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism. He stayed in Iran for three years and after the October Revolution emigrated to France rather than return to Russia.

Hasan Vosuq ed-Dowleh, twice Prime Minister (Aug 1916-June 1917 and Aug 1918- July 1920), was a fierce proponent of the 1919 Anglo-Russian agreement that would have turned Persia into a British protectorate. The pact remained unratified and was formally reproved by the Majles in June 1921.

At the end of these negotiations, the late Vosuq ed-Dowleh felt that the Jangalis' position was acceptable, and that Ahmad Shah's was not. The late Seyyed Mohammad Tadayyon was thus dispatched to establish a closer relationship with the Jangalis.

Seyyed Mohammad Birjandi, named Tadayyon (R) after his eponymous school in Tehran, joined the Emigrés in Kermanshah and was a leading figure of the Democratic Party. He was a strong proponent of the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement that remained unratified and was formally denounced by the Majles in June 1919.

Unfortunately, the late Tadayyon's mission failed due to Mirza Kouchak Khan's excessive hesitation and suspicions. Next, it was the late [Islamist, anti-imperialist] Haji Aqa Shirazi who came to Gilan; the late Vosuq ed-Dowleh even offered to join the Islamic Unity Party. Haji Aqa Shirazi likewise failed in his mission.

The British requested a joint meeting with me as the plenipotentiary representative of the Islamic Unity Council and Dr. Abol-Qassem Khan Farid. When we met, they agreed to our very clearly expressed demand to expand the limits of Mirza's authority and territorial domain. They even suggested that Mirza dispatch a security force to Tehran, purportedly to protect the late Ahmad Shah, and travel to Tehran with the group himself. Farid and I reported our exchanges to a closed session of the Islamic Unity Council. Mirza Kouchak Khan did not initially disagree with the proposal and asked for the Nationalist leadership to certify the British offer in writing. The British welcomed Mirza's request and it was not long before the top leaders of the Nationalists in Tehran in whom Mirza, and perhaps the whole nation, had great trust followed up. However, the certification of the agreement by the Nationalists intensified Mirza's suspicions and he rejected the British proposal altogether. In response, Farid and I quit the Islamic Unity Council; I returned to Tehran, and he stayed in Rasht.[29]

Divisions and conflicts ensued among other members of the Islamic Unity Council as well. In the end, a small group remained with Mirza in the forest while Vosuq ed-Dowleh's government used the opportunity and ordered General Staroslessky and a cordon of soldiers to eviscerate the Jangalis and

[29] Not long after, on 5 June 1920, Mirza Kouchak Khan declared the Soviet Socialist Republic of Gilan.

appointed Teymourtash as governor of Gilan. After they besieged the area, Dr. Heshmat and a group surrendered and were then executed.

In Aug 1920, Gen. Vsevolod Starosselsky suffered a setback against the Jangalis when the Soviet Caspian Flotilla landed a warship in Anzali to capture White Russian ships and munitions. He stayed in Iran post-October Revolution and took command of the Persian Cossacks.

Dr. Ebrahim Taleqani, Heshmat ol-Atebba (b. 1885) studied French at the Alliance Française in Tehran and medicine at the Dar ol-Fonun. He met Kouchak Khan in 1917 and became a key Jangali leader.

Dr. Heshmat (2nd L) *was hanged on 3 May 1919.*

Abdol-Hossein Teymourtash received military training in St. Petersburg and at 26 was the youngest deputy in the 2nd Majles (from Neishapour). He served less than a year as governor of Gilan in 1919-1920 while Staroslessky, appointed military governor, presided over the Jangali trials by a five-member tribunal of Cossack officers.

Mirza and a few men fled to Māsuleh and ravaged by cold weather, died. His head was cut off, stuffed with straw, and sent to Tehran. By then the World War had ended. Soviet Russia was entangled in a civil war, and the British enjoyed unlimited freedom in Iranian political affairs.

End